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**Department of Commerce and Insurance
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CONSUMER ALERT

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ATTORNEY GENERAL ASKS TENNESSEANS TO BE AWARE OF POTENTIAL PRICE GOUGERS IN WAKE OF HURRICANE KATRINA

State officials have predicted that the Gulf Coast evacuations for Hurricane Katrina could send several thousand people to Tennessee seeking shelter. As a result, Attorney General Paul Summers is asking Tennesseans to be on the lookout for potential price gougers. Of particular concern are hotel bills, fuel, groceries and other emergency supplies.

Some individuals may take advantage of potential victims of one of the nation's largest hurricanes by dramatically raising the prices they charge for goods and services that are necessary and vital to consumers. This practice is called price gouging.

"At a time when our thoughts and prayers are with those affected by the hurricane and its potential aftermath, Tennessee stands ready to offer our aid and assistance to those who need it," Attorney General Summers said. "We will not tolerate actions that aggravate this situation."

Mary Clement, the Director of the Division of Consumer Affairs, said "I urge consumers to call the State's consumer hotline at 1-800-342-8385 to report price gouging activities. Please be prepared to provide the specifics including the location of the business and the price charged so we can take appropriate action."

In the event that a state of emergency is declared, the Attorney General, in conjunction

with the Tennessee Division of Consumer Affairs, will aggressively pursue price gougers. People who raise prices to take advantage of the public during this emergency are subject to the penalties of up to \$1,000 per violation of the Tennessee Consumer Protection Act.

“While most Tennessee businesses always abide by the law and would never take advantage of those in need,” Summers said, “consumers should be alert to potential unscrupulous individuals who may illegally inflate prices.”